

## ARRIVAL STATEMENT

INTERNATIONAL DELEGATION  
TO BULGARIAN NATIONAL ELECTIONS

Sofia Bulgaria  
June 8, 1990

We are an international delegation of 60 observers from 23 countries who are present in Bulgaria this week to witness the elections to the Grand National Assembly. The delegation includes parliamentarians, political party leaders, election administrators, journalists and democratic activists. Many of them have participated in other election missions, and a number have visited Bulgaria in the recent past.

We are here in strict accordance with Bulgarian law to examine the development of the electoral process, including the voting and counting on election day. It is important to emphasize that we are just observers, and not participants. We are not here to arbitrate, and we take no position on the outcome of the election. Nor are we here to interfere in the internal affairs of Bulgaria. We simply want to see for ourselves that the people of this country are able to cast a secret ballot in a fair and meaningful election.

This perspective is consistent with the practice of international missions to elections in other countries, and is widely accepted as the standard for observer conduct. It has also been accepted by the Central Election Commission, the government and the major political forces.

Our mission has several purposes. We wish our presence to be symbolic of international support for a free and fair election, and for a genuine and complete democratic transition. We also hope our presence will provide Bulgarians with confidence in the election process, because many of them are suspicious and distrustful after so many years of one-party rule. We are also here

to learn about the electoral process from firsthand contacts with Bulgarians, including voters and local administrators, so that we may provide a complete assessment to the international community afterwards.

Given the momentous changes that are underway in this country and the region, it is not surprising that these historic elections have attracted the attention of the world. It is also worth noting that Bulgarians of every political persuasion have welcomed and encouraged this interest, and that there are numerous other delegations present, as well.

In just two days, the citizens of Bulgaria will vote in their first competitive, multi-party election in more than half a century. Though debate continues even on this eve of the election regarding certain aspects of the process, virtually the whole of the nation is clearly united in one regard: their desire and their determination to participate. And while only six months have passed since the communist party relinquished its monopoly on power, these elections promise a new era for Bulgaria, one which we hope will be distinguished by its democratic character, respect for the rights of all citizens, and strengthened by Bulgaria's increasing integration into the international community.

We have met today with a broad spectrum of Bulgarians to solicit their views on the electoral process and the campaign that has taken place. Tomorrow our delegation will divide into 12 teams, 11 of which will travel to towns in every part of the country. These teams will meet with local political leaders and election administrators in these regions. On Sunday, we will observe the balloting and counting processes around the country.

The delegation will seek to evaluate three distinct elements of the election process. With respect to the election campaign, delegates will ascertain whether Bulgarians believe that the political environment and the election laws and regulations allowed all participants in the process to communicate their views to the public. Regarding the procedures on election day, we will analyze whether voters were able to cast their ballots in secret and without

*Appendix VI*

fear of intimidation. Finally, in analyzing the counting process, we will attempt to determine whether the ballots have been accurately tallied, relying on a review of official results, as well as the results of the parallel tabulations of the vote being conducted by private nonpartisan groups. Throughout the weekend, our teams around the country will remain in communication with our office in Sofia and the delegation leaders.

On Monday, June 11, the delegation will regroup in Sofia for a full debriefing and comparison of observations. On Monday at 11:00 a.m., we will offer a preliminary statement to the press at a press conference here at the Sheraton Hotel.

The delegation has been organized by the National Democratic Institute (NDI) and the National Republican Institute for International Affairs (NRIIA), which are affiliated with their respective political parties in the United States. The two institutes conduct programs in support of democratic development around the world and have each been active in Bulgaria since the start of the year. They have sponsored a number of observer missions similar to this one, jointly and separately, in the Philippines, Haiti, Panama, Paraguay, Pakistan, Honduras, Chile, Nicaragua, Taiwan, South Korea, Namibia, Bangladesh, Hungary, Romania and, as we speak, Czechoslovakia.

The institutes have had staff in Bulgaria almost continuously since March, and so we in the delegation have benefited from a full review of the campaign during these previous three months. Pre-election surveys of the election administration and the campaign environment have been conducted, and have highlighted a number of issues of interest. These reports will enable this delegation to provide a comprehensive assessment of the whole process.

**POST-ELECTION STATEMENT****INTERNATIONAL DELEGATION TO  
BULGARIAN NATIONAL ELECTIONS**

Sofia, Bulgaria  
June 11, 1990

We are pleased to offer this preliminary statement on behalf of the international delegation organized jointly by the National Democratic Institute for International Affairs and the National Republican Institute for International Affairs. This delegation consists of 60 members from 23 countries, many of whom have participated in observer missions before and several of whom have been part of pre-election surveys here.

We divided into twelve teams over the weekend, eleven of which traveled to towns in the countryside for two-and-a-half days following intensive briefings in Sofia. These teams generally concentrated their observations in the smaller towns and villages, and stayed in touch with the delegation leadership which remained in Sofia. Altogether, we visited some 350 voting sections. We coordinated our schedule with the Bulgarian Association for Fair Elections, which mobilized more than 10,000 volunteers to establish a presence at most voting sections in the country. We have also cooperated with other international delegations in Bulgaria this week to maximize our effectiveness and coverage.

It is most important to note that our assessment of the election process in Bulgaria began with pre-election survey missions more than two months ago, and it is not yet completed. Some of our delegation and staff will remain in the country through next week's run-off elections, and we will later produce a comprehensive report on the entire process that has led to these elections. Yet it seems worthwhile to offer some preliminary judgements at this point, on the morning after the history-making elections of June 10.

Pre-election missions identified some of the hurdles relating to inequities in resources available to the various parties, inadequate administrative procedures and questions of intimidation and political pressure. The authorities were responsive to some of these concerns, and always accessible and cordial to our delegations. Yet the legacy of 45 years of what the country's present leaders acknowledge has been totalitarian rule cannot be forgotten in a few months, and in Bulgaria it has not been.

One of the most difficult issues which an observer delegation must consider is whether the voters were intimidated into voting a different way than their conscience would otherwise dictate. Overt intimidation -- written or verbal threats, a heavy and threatening military or police presence or actual physical abuse -- can be detected. But intimidation can also be psychological and sociological, a subtle but insidious deterrent to free voting that is not as visible. A long history of dictatorship can affect the behavior of a voting population. When this is the case, only the most aggressive reassurances by a government can overcome the fear people feel.

There were incidents on election day that could be interpreted as overt intimidation. The delegation heard about vote buying, a mayor who drove voters to the polls, letters sent from officials to voters, threats that voters would lose their pensions or jobs if the opposition won, military officers present at places where conscripts voted and voting booths arranged in such a way to convey the impression to voters that officials would know how people voted. In a democracy with some history, some of these examples might be considered benign. This is not the case in Bulgaria, a society that was until recently oppressed by its own government. Overall, we did not see intimidation of such a nature as to invalidate the national election, although we believe that investigations are necessary to determine whether irregularities affected the results of specific constituencies.

Given its modern history, it is difficult to detect intimidation in Bulgaria, and it is even more difficult to measure its effect in

votes. We can only say it was a factor. That is why we urged the government to reassure voters that they should have no fears because the ballot was secret. Though this was attempted by electoral authorities the day before the election, we must conclude that this was insufficient to overcome 45 years of harsh communist rule and the lack of a political culture disposed to free choice in the rural areas. In Sofia, by contrast, we witnessed a major attitudinal reversal over the three-month campaign and a freedom of expression which resembles any democratic capital.

A great deal has taken place in this country. Substantial negotiations in the Roundtable framework produced agreement on a wide variety of issues, large and small, including the procedure for these elections. Parties and other independent groups have formed and become active in many fields. The press has become freer and more diverse and, during the campaign, the major political parties were provided significant access to television.

Despite the challenge of preparing for an election in a short period of time, the Central Election Commission has been responsive to concerns raised by opposition parties and international observers in the past few weeks and as recently as the morning of election day. For instance, it was agreed that a parallel vote tabulation could be conducted by independent observers to enhance confidence in the officially reported results; it was decided that citizens could effectively register to vote on election day so as to minimize the exclusion of voters due to the poor quality of some voter registries; media time and other resources were provided to opposition parties and coalitions. In sum, despite the problems that existed throughout the campaign, all major parties were able to communicate their messages to the public.

An election has clearly taken place. This is a substantial accomplishment, and it indicates that Bulgaria is a very different place from what it was before the 10th of November 1989. A vital appreciation for the rule of law is growing and will further define the democratic character of the society when mature.

The unfortunate reality that fear is still a factor in the country is not cause to invalidate this election. But it does mean that the government has a serious challenge to erase this fear so that there will be no doubt future elections will be decided by fully informed voters who feel free to vote their conscience.

We know that complaints have been filed with the Central Election Commission about significant irregularities. We have been assured by the Commission, the proper body for such questions, that these complaints will be investigated fully. This is important because a fair election process requires the vigorous investigation by a properly constituted body with the power and the inclination to prosecute violations. Even where it does not affect the outcome of a particular election, such investigations and prosecutions are necessary to ensure that the rule of law is upheld. We want to underscore that it is the government in power that has the responsibility to assure that this occurs. Moreover, the government needs to address itself visibly to the widespread fear that reprisals will be taken against opposition activists or voters. We see it as part of our role to continue our review during this post-election phase.

In conclusion, we would like to express our hope and our expectation that Bulgaria, a nation that has long been isolated from the world community and not always well treated by its neighbors, will find its democratic future strengthened by growing contacts with other nations. Many vital and difficult tasks remain to be addressed. These include political and social reforms, significant economic restructuring and a greater respect for the rights of minorities -- specifically, the Turkish community which has suffered a great deal and whose exile community was effectively disenfranchised. The local elections that are envisioned for later in the year will provide a further opportunity for Bulgaria to demonstrate that political pluralism can be a meaningful reality for a society in transition.

Nations that observe and respect well established international human rights standards find themselves more warmly welcomed by

the expanding democratic world community. As a first step in that process, we hope that all contesting parties will make clear as soon as possible their intention to cooperate in the further development of democratic institutions in this country.